

PREVIEWING UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS, EVENTS, SALES AND AUCTIONS OF HISTORIC FINE ART

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Through Eagles' Eyes

Questroyal Fine Art presents its annual exhibition of Hudson River School paintings including works by Francis Augustus Silva, Albert Bierstadt, and William Trost Richards

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By John O'Hern

Scientists tell us that eagles have eyesight four to eight times as sharp as humans. If we had eagles' eyes we would be able to spot an ant on the ground from the top of a 10-story building.

Questroyal Fine Art's annual exhibition of Hudson River School paintings is titled *Through Eagles' Eyes*. Artists not only look, they *see*. And they see with more clarity and depth than the person who has never gone outside to look.

George Orwell summed up humanity's physical and psychological vision when he wrote "To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle."

Louis M. Salerno, owner of Questroyal Fine Art, says, "I always enjoyed nature but it wasn't until I could see what artists did—how they expressed it on canvas—that I could then go out in nature and see that for myself."

He describes the indescribable effect of art. "There are certain paintings that have a magic about them...You know it when you see it and you know it when you feel it."

The works in the current exhibition are some of the best by the artists who painted them. They produce an "Ah-ha!" of recognizing a phenomenon of



Francis Augustus Silva (1835-1886), *On the North River*,
1879. Oil on canvas, 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 36 $\frac{1}{8}$ in., signed and dated
lower left: 'Francis A. Silva./79'; title and signed verso:
'*On the North River./Francis A. Silva*'.





William Trost Richards (1833–1905),
After a Storm, 1899. Oil on canvas,
 19¾ x 32¼ in., signed and dated lower left:
 ‘Wm. T. Richards. 99’.

nature we have seen ourselves or they incite an awe that will propel us out the door to experience it for the first time.

Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) painted the sun shining through the mist of the California coast, the sparkling streams of Yosemite, and the shadowed green hills of the Adirondacks. Writing about *Boats Ashore at Sunset*, Chelsea DeLay of Questroyal says, “You can almost feel the warmth of the last rays of sunlight travel across your cheeks as the sun dips behind the mountains, leaving a fiery sunset in its wake.”

The sea was a primary theme for William Trost Richards (1833–1905) after he began to take vacation trips along the New Jersey and New England shore. He had begun his career painting in an exacting pre-Raphaelite style. He carried his keen observational skills and



Right: William Trost Richards
 (1833–1905), *Woodland Interior*, 1856.
 Oil on canvas, 31½ x 25½ in., signed and
 dated lower left: ‘W.T. Richards./Phil 1856’.



Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902),
Boats Ashore at Sunset. Oil on canvas,
13¼ x 23½ in., monogrammed
lower right: 'ABierstadt'.



John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872), *New England Coastal Scene with Figures*, 1864.
Oil on canvas, 14¼ x 24¾ in., monogrammed and dated lower right: 'JFK. / '64'.

meticulous painting skills into his new infatuation with seascapes—a bit at odds with his more romantic and painterly Hudson River School peers. Richards is represented by a seascape, *After a Storm* (1899), and an earlier bucolic landscape, titled *Woodland Interior* (1856).

Francis Augustus Silva (1835-1886) painted poetic and luminous scenes along the Northeast coast

and the Hudson River. He tweaked his observations with what William Wordsworth called “emotion recollected in tranquility.” “Some men never paint from memory or feeling,” Silva wrote. “They give us only cold facts in the most mannered way.” Completing a painting from memory is something Thomas Cole (1801-1848), the founder of the Hudson River School, wrote

about to a friend. “By looking intently on an object for 20 minutes I can go into my room and paint it with much more truth than I could if I employed several hours on the spot. By this means I become more intimately acquainted with the characteristic spirit of nature than I could otherwise do.”

Silva’s *On the North River* (1879) is a masterful depiction of activity on the stretch of the Hudson running between Manhattan and New Jersey. It was called North River by the Dutch. The sun hits the white hull of a sloop and its turquoise cabin as it is docked among a jumble of other ships. Behind it a horse and wagon are silhouetted against the sail of another ship. Silva has concentrated an extraordinary amount of information in the right third of the composition, with decreasing activity and information toward the left third. The subtle gradations of light are mesmerizing.

This is one of those paintings in which you can both see and feel the magic. ■